



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

ADJOURNMENT

Melbourne Electorate: Urban Planning

SPEECH

Thursday, 26 February 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Thursday, 26 February 2015
Page 1552
Questioner
Speaker Bandt, Adam, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (12:30): We need a new discussion about the future of our cities because at the moment there is no planning in planning. There is a proposed development and proposed changes in my electorate of Melbourne that starkly illustrate what is wrong. A private developer wants to build a huge 17-storey apartment building at the Downtowner site, at the corner of Queensberry Street and Lygon Street in Carlton. The development is clearly wrong for the site. It will tower above its generally low-rise surrounds, does not respect the area's heritage and does not appear to comply with the planning scheme. There have been over 50 objections from local residents and businesses, and the Carlton Residents Association has strongly condemned the proposal as totally out of place. I stand with the community in its fight against this utterly inappropriate development.

But I note with concern another new threat facing Carlton that shows an utter failure to properly plan our cities. The council, dominated by people who do not live in the municipality, has voted to rezone sections of Carlton as capital city zone, the same zone that currently applies to the CBD. The capital city zone is proposed to expand into Carlton, west of Swanston Street and to the old Royal Women's Hospital site.

The problem is the capital city zone carries an exemption to residents' and property owners' third-party rights: the right to object to a development, the right to appeal a decision and, worst of all, the requirement of a developer to provide full notice of their plans to local residents. You would have no right, if you lived in this part of Carlton, to be told about a proposed multistorey development next door. Under these circumstances, with transparency and all rights for local residents removed, what sort of scrutiny will be applied to projects in the future? What accountability to the local community will there be for the big developers who seek to push the envelope and build ever bigger buildings?

The Greens have fought hard against the affront to democracy that is the removal of third-party rights. The Greens City of Melbourne councillors, Rohan Leppert and Cathy Oke, strongly support third-party rights. They have worked closely with the Carlton community and moved twice to reinstate third-party rights into the capital city zone last year, but both times the Liberal majority on council dismissed these moves.

Let's be clear: the Greens support inner city development in agreed urban renewal areas. Melbourne's urban boundary cannot keep expanding, spreading outwards and taking over arable land, and that in turn means a level of urban renewal inside these boundaries. But any development in areas with established communities, like Carlton, must be undertaken in a transparent way, with as much community control as possible.

Now, though, this decision has been sent to the state Minister for Planning, the Labor member for Richmond, Richard Wynne, who has the final say. Sitting on Minister Wynne's desk are two documents. The first is the final version of a planning scheme amendment to rezone Carlton west of Swanston Street to capital city zone, complete with a removal of residents' third-party rights. The second is a request to send a draft planning scheme amendment to rezone the old women's hospital to capital city zone, along with a removal of residents' third-party rights, to a planning panel for further assessment.

But there is a third document: the state Labor government's election manifesto. Page 88 says:

Labor will review planning and environment laws ... to:

Promote the principles of third party rights in all processes

So I say to the state planning minister: do what your election manifesto says. Put back into all of these zones, existing and proposed, the third-party rights enjoyed by Victorians in the rest of the state: the right to know about a development, the right to share an opinion on the development and the right to participate in the objection and assessment process.

This is one of the first tests for the new Labor government. Labor, will you follow the Liberals or will you follow the Greens? The Greens have long stood up for community centred planning. In Melbourne, we are working for better representation for residents and an end to the undemocratic power wielded by business. We are working for an end to developer donations to local council candidates, we are instituting processes for community participation in drawing up council budgets and we are pushing for a return of planning powers to communities and democratic councils, not VCAT and the state minister. We will hold Labor and the Liberals to account. But if local communities continue to be overridden by outside powers, and if Labor's Minister Wynne signs off on the attack on residents' rights, we will continue to see disasters like the Downtowner site redevelopment.